

INFO PACK: SOLIDARITEE GRANT APPLICATIONS 2022

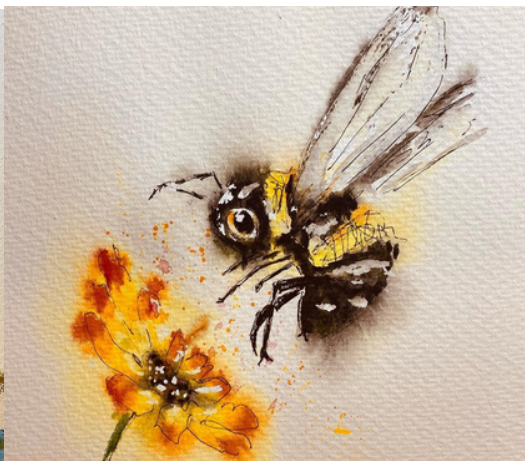
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Dear All,

Thank you for your interest in applying to SolidariTee for grant funding – we are delighted to be able to open applications for a new grant cycle at this time, and it is always a real honour to be able to learn more about the work done by so many incredible organisations.

By way of a brief introduction to our work, SolidriTee's core mission is to further the **provision of empowering, long-term forms of aid** to refugees, asylum seekers, and others forced to flee their homes and/or to migrate in vulnerable situations. Grant-making is a core part of how we do this, whilst the other part takes the form of education and awareness-raising.

Throughout the year, we fundraise and awareness-raise through a combination of online and offline events, ranging from our podcast and conferences to cookery and art classes. We also sell SolidariTee t-shirts, each with designs based on artwork created by artists with experiences of forced migration, creating vital conversations about global refugee issues. SolidariTee is entirely volunteer run, with several-hundred student volunteers organising activities and fundraisers at universities across the UK and beyond.

To describe our values in more detail, I wanted to address what we mean by 'empowering, long-term aid'.

By **empowering**, we mean that the services provided by the aid organisation are respectful of, and accountable to, the affected population, and so are the ethos and language used by the organisation and in relation to their clients/beneficiaries*. We also mean that the type of aid provided equips people with knowledge, skills and/or support in order to make their own decisions, and restores as far as possible the agency and autonomy that is all too often eroded by the power imbalances that exist within the asylum process.

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By **long-term**, we mean forms of aid which further a person's ability to access their rights and/or contributes to ensuring that someone is safer from harm in the long-term. Historically, SolidariTee has focussed on funding legal aid for this reason; legal aid can prevent unjust rejections, enabling people to leave refugee camps and access the rights to housing, work and education for years to come. **We're seeking for the services provided to each beneficiary to be sustainable; in other words, for the impact to last long after the intervention has finished**, without needing to be perpetually provided in order for the person to be able to access their rights.

This year, our mission through our grant funding is specifically to bridge the gap between legal aid and MHPSS (mental health and psychosocial support) to create impactful, lasting change, and in doing so, to mitigate some of the psychological harms that are inherent within the asylum process.

I developed the vision for this grant cycle as a result of a combination of academic and professional experience in fields spanning psychology and neuroscience, humanitarian action, and aid provision within the European Asylum system specifically. By providing focussed funding, we seek to meaningfully build capacity for the provision of trauma-informed services which exist within, rather than outside of, the legal aid that is so vital for those seeking asylum. In section 3, I have included further information as to the rationale behind our priorities for grant funding, from my own perspective. This is for the interest of those following and supporting SolidariTee's work as much as it is for those applying to grant funding.

If, after reading the rest of this document, you have any questions about eligibility or the rationale behind our funding priorities, please do send me an email.

Yours in SolidariTee,

Alexa Netty

CEO & Trustee

alexa@solidaritee.org.uk

SECTION 1: APPLICATION DETAILS

Available funding:

SolidariTee has £120,000 available to disburse within the current grant cycle.

We anticipate splitting this into **3 grants of £30,000, and 2 additional grants of £15,000**, but this may be subject to change dependent on the applications received. We will choose a minimum of 3 organisations to fund.

Application process & timeline:

The closing deadline for applications is **midnight GMT on Saturday 8th October**.

Following a review of initial applications, longlisted applicants will be invited to attend an **online interview** with our grant committee. After this time, shortlisted applicants may be asked to submit additional written information and/or attend a subsequent interview. We are doing our best to be respectful of NGO time, and strike the balance between receiving enough detailed information to make an informed choice, without placing an undue burden on NGO capacity, so if any aspect of this application process will be challenging for your organization, please get in touch. We are also able to receive applications in languages other than English - please email us if this is applicable.

Within a week of the closing date for initial applications, all applicants will be notified as to the outcome of their application, with longlisted applicants being invited to interview. **Final decisions will be completed by mid-November at the latest.**

Grant funding will be disbursed between December 2022 and October 2023, in installments to be decided with each NGO.

SECTION 1: APPLICATION DETAILS (CTD)

The grant committee at SolidariTee will be the selection panel for this round of grant funding, with oversight from the Board of Trustees.

The grant committee is comprised of the following people:

Alexa Netty (chair) - SolidariTee CEO, currently Finance Officer at Disasters Emergency Committee on secondment from Deloitte

Katel Giacometti - Refugee Integration Department, Lausanne

Caitlin Phillips - Lecturer, Clinical Psychology, Essex University

Joe Weghofer - Philanthropy & Partnerships Manager, HESTIA

Becca Young - Junior Doctor & previously SolidariTee Fundraising Director

We reserve the right to add people to this committee as advisors should the need arise, and not all members of the committee may be present at interview.

Due diligence checks may be carried out on successful NGOs, and all organisations will be required to sign a grant agreement before any funding is disbursed. Reporting requirements will be discussed with successful grant recipients, but will consist of 6-monthly progress reports in addition to a final report at the end of the implementation period. Face-to-face calls are likely to be requested at intervals throughout the year (generally 4x per year) for short contextual updates which can be used to support the awareness-raising activities carried out by our student team, but are generally optional.

SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Location:

During this grant cycle, SolidariTee is focusing its funding on NGOs working in Europe. The country/ies of operation do not need to be part of the EU (NGOs operating in Turkiye & countries in the Western Balkans are eligible to apply), but NGOs primarily operating in the UK are ineligible.

If you feel that the work done by your organisation strongly aligns with SolidariTee's funding priorities but is based in a region outside of SolidariTee's standard programming, please email alexa@solidaritee.org.uk **before** applying, and eligibility can be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Structure of organisation:

Non-governmental, non-profit organisations are eligible to apply, provided they have the legal right and necessary permissions to operate in their region/s of activity. For-profit organisations are ineligible, as are individuals not applying on behalf of a specific organisation - we are unable to provide grant funding to people seeking financial support to enable them to volunteer abroad.

Financial Position of NGO:

Organisations with a turnover of more than £1 million GBP (or the equivalent in currency) are ineligible to apply. Organisations with a turnover of between £600,000-£1m should note that, with SolidariTee funding contributing to less than 5% of their turnover, applications should clearly state the difference that this relatively small contribution to the budget will make.

SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (CTD)

Type of activities undertaken:

This year, we are limiting our grant funding to those **organisations providing legal aid and/or mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)**. Our core objective for this grant cycle is to facilitate a more trauma-informed approach to supporting people navigating the asylum process in Europe, to ensure long-term access to rights and protection from harm.

Applications from **legal aid actors** are welcomed, even if they do not have a specific MHPSS function (such as a psychologist team) within the organisation itself. However, a core selection criterion for this funding cycle will be aimed at ensuring that the **legal services provided are being offered in a trauma-informed way, with collaboration and input from MHPSS actors** being highly prized.

Applications from **MHPSS actors** are also welcomed – this could include teams of psychologists and/or psychiatrists, in addition to protection and social work in the broader sense. When assessing these applications, our core selection criteria will include a focus on ensuring that these **MHPSS services are being provided with an acknowledgement of, and in coordination with, legal aid and a person's experiences of the asylum process.**

Note: MHPSS services provided in isolation, without collaboration with legal aid actors and/or due regard to the asylum process itself, will likely not fall within SolidariTee's priorities for funding.

Community centres providing activities with a positive impact on mental health such as art therapy, sports, or educational classes, are likely to fall outside the scope of SolidariTee's grant funding unless they are explicitly linked to work being done to support people before, during and/ or after the asylum process itself. Medical actors who do not have a specific psychological or psychiatric component will also be ineligible to apply.

SECTION 3: ABOUT THIS GRANT CYCLE - WHY DO LEGAL AID AND MHPSS GO HAND IN HAND?

Since the beginning of SolidariTee's journey, we have focussed the vast majority of our funding on legal aid and other services integral to it, such as translation and interpretation services. The funding we have provided has supported legal aid NGOs in providing interview preparation sessions, information provision both in person and online, representation during appeals, and family reunification services, in addition to strategic litigation and advocacy work.

We believe very strongly in the power of legal aid in preventing asylum seekers from experiencing unjust rejections and deportations, in reuniting families, and in enabling those fleeing violence and persecution to leave the terrible conditions in refugee camps and gain the rights to work, healthcare and education. In sum, legal aid supports people and restores their agency to rebuild their lives and communities in safety, without fear of life-threatening persecution, and challenges many of the procedural violations and injustices which are inherent within the asylum system.

However, we recognise that legal aid cannot exist in a vacuum. The incidence of poor mental health, and mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and acute suicidality is, unsurprisingly, far higher in asylum-seeking populations, especially those living in refugee camps, than in the general population. Reasons for this include the fact that those seeking asylum have very often experienced violence, persecution, and other forms of abuse including torture in the country they were forced to flee. This, in combination with the fact that those crossing borders in search of safety are often forced to make incredibly dangerous and life-threatening journeys, which frequently involve violent and illegal pushbacks at land and/or sea, means that almost all those seeking asylum in countries such as Greece will have experienced severe and compounding forms of trauma*.

*In this context, I use the word trauma to refer to an extreme adverse event which falls outside of the scope of hardships which may be experienced by anyone within the general population. It is important to note that whilst an experience (physical or sexual violence, mental or physical torture) may be classed as traumatic, this does not necessarily mean that the affected person should be referred to as *traumatised*.

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Furthermore, conditions in refugee camps themselves, and/or the homelessness experienced by so many forcibly displaced people across Europe and beyond, contribute profoundly to poor mental health and an inability to access many fundamental services which are so crucial to living in physical and mental safety.

Though the factors listed above are well documented, what is less often discussed is **the impact of legal limbo, and of the legal process of seeking asylum itself, on a person's mental health.** Many people seeking asylum in Greece are still forced to wait months or even years before they can even lodge asylum applications, let alone attend asylum interviews or receive decisions on initial applications or appeals. Still others are forcibly rushed through asylum procedures at days' or weeks' notice, leaving no time to prepare. Existing within a system where you can't predict how long you will be living in the current conditions of a refugee camp, or what will happen to you following your application, undoubtedly takes an enormous mental toll.

The asylum process itself, in addition to the preparation involved, also comes with major challenges from a trauma psychology perspective. There is remarkably little academic research in this area, so the below is derived from first principles.

A major pillar of any work in the field of trauma psychology and mental health first aid relates to the fact that a person who has experienced trauma should never be forced to recount their experiences unless they so wish to, and most certainly should never be asked to do so whilst in a physically or psychologically unsafe situation. **These psychological principles run entirely counter to the asylum system itself.** Within an asylum interview, applicants are asked to recount experiences in minute detail, with any inconsistencies or missing details having the potential to cost someone their entire asylum application.

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In addition, it is well established that the brain processes memories differently in traumatic or highly emotional situations compared to everyday situations. There is evidence that traumatic memories are stored in different regions of the brain, and that the brain generally focuses more on the emotional components of the memory than the episodic (details, time and chronological) components.

This is to say that, in traumatic situations, such as in the experiences of persecution which often force someone to flee their home and to seek asylum, our brains are simply not wired to be able to store, process and recall information in the way that the asylum system requires, even without considering how emotionally painful being forced to do so may be.

In large part because of this, legal aid is crucial in enabling people to organise the information needed to recount their experience, and collect the physical evidence required to back up their narrative, given that events which occurred months or years ago may have been processed by the person in a way which makes it very difficult to meet the obligations of the asylum process without support.

At the same time, I (Alexa) believe that the sector as a whole needs to further acknowledge how much is being asked of asylum seekers from a psychological perspective, and recognise that the entire process is geared around recounting traumatic memories in a psychologically unsafe situation.

Many people - though it is important to recognise, NOT all - who have experienced traumatic events may display post-traumatic symptoms which persist for months or years after the events. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is common in refugees and asylum seekers, and is characterised by prolonged symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, hyper-vigilance and avoidance of situations which remind the person of the original event. The symptoms of PTSD, along with many other mental health conditions, may make it even more difficult for someone to meet the obligations of the asylum process.

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It is very common for asylum seekers to break down during their interviews, and/or to simply not be able to verbalise what has happened to them. Furthermore, the act of being forced to recount experiences in such a high-pressure situation as an asylum interview, the outcome of which can, in some cases, be literally life or death, can itself induce or worsen the incidence of post-traumatic symptoms.

Following the initial event itself, a person may have few or none of these symptoms, but may later develop them following the asylum process itself.

Legal aid has immense potential to both help and harm a person's mental health during the asylum process. Having the support of a legal professional who has taken the time to develop a trusting relationship with their client can make the world of difference in enabling someone to prepare themselves in a safe setting, understand the process and obligations, and be informed of the types of questions they may be asked such that they can **psychologically equip themselves to respond.**

In addition, legal aid helps to provide access to the long-term rights which are absolutely necessary for all people everywhere. **It is very difficult to improve mental health within a context of dangerous living conditions, legal limbo, and lack of access to community or work, and in this way, legal aid itself lays the foundations for psychological safety.** Furthermore, psychiatrist's reports which confirm that a person does indeed have a diagnosis of a mental health condition such as PTSD can provide invaluable evidence to support a person's asylum claim, by acting as **supporting documentation to corroborate the fact that a traumatic event did indeed occur.**

On the flip side, **legal aid delivered improperly can unfortunately compound the problems,** increasing the number of times a person is forced to recount traumatic events without proper support or the ability to opt-out being provided.

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In practical terms, there are a number of ways in which mental health and psychosocial support can support people to improve their experiences of the asylum process and vice versa improving legal and mental health outcomes. A few examples are included below:

- **Training sessions** provided by qualified psychiatrists and psychologists to legal aid actors, providing education and guidance around how to best support clients who have experienced trauma.
- **Mental health first aid and emergency stabilisation sessions** provided to those in mental health crisis as a result of the asylum process.
- **Co-referral** between legal and MHPSS actors to ensure that clients are being effectively supported in both areas.
- **Private or group sessions** offered to those navigating the asylum procedure, supporting with grounding exercises and coping/resilience strategies to enable clients to complete the asylum process and convey the information required.
- **Psychologists' and/or psychiatrists' reports** issued to support legal aid actors with supporting documentation in an asylum claim.
- **Research and advocacy** conducted by legal and/or MHPSS actors, in order to fight for a more trauma-informed asylum process.

This is a non-exhaustive list, and we look forward to receiving applications from organisations providing innovative solutions to the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees* within the European asylum system.

*We would also like to acknowledge the fact that many forcibly displaced people do not qualify for any form of protection under the UN Refugee Convention. Whilst our Theory of Change is predominantly based around the European Asylum system, we welcome applications from those supporting people forcibly displaced or forced to migrate in vulnerable situations other than refugees and asylum seekers, including but not limited to victims of trafficking, rejected asylum seekers, and climate migrants, provided the NGO's work aligns with our funding priorities.